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902. r. 36: MITROVICH (G.): The Claims of the Maltese.



THE
CLAIMS OF THE MALTESE ;

FOUNDED UPON THE

PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE.

By GEORGE MITROVICH,
A NATIVE OF MALTA, AND A FAITHFUL SUBJECT OF THE CROWN OF
GREAT BRITAIN, NOW IN LONDON.

LONDON :
PUBLISHED BY EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

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THE
CLAIMS OF THE MALTESE,

&c. &c.

London, July 31, 1835.

It is now time that the British nation should be made acquainted with the actual state of the island of Malta, and that every Maltese, who is attached to his country, should direct his voice to every Englishman, animated with the spirit of moderate liberty, humanity, and philanthropy, and invoke his powerful aid in favour and support of a people, brave, patient and highly praiseworthy, well-disposed, loyal, and faithful to the British Crown.

It is incontestably true, that the Maltese, from very remote periods, enjoyed many privileges, immunities, and franchises,—they were governed by their own laws, they had their magistrates, and representatives who were accustomed to assemble in council. Their great shield against oppression and a profligate expenditure of public money, was their National council.

On the breaking out of the insurrection against the French republicans in September 1798, the first measure of the Maltese was to re-establish this council (which had been despotically suspended by the latter Grand Masters of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem), to which they then gave the name of Congress. This Congress was composed of representatives of the clergy and of the people of the whole country freely elected, and had appointed as president Sir Alexander John Ball, then commanding his Majesty's naval forces in the blockade of Valletta.

When the British troops took possession of the fortifica-

tions in Sept. 1800, the Congress was suspended by Sir A. Ball, the very man who had stipulated with the Maltese and promised its preservation ; he established a system of government entirely arbitrary and despotic, contrary to the expectations of the Maltese, and instead of allowing them to be governed by their ancient laws, conformably to the spirit of the British constitution, he adopted the detested code of Rohan, which had already destroyed some of their privileges, and which code is in force in the island to this day.

This system of government has now existed in Malta for thirty-five years, during which time Deputations have been sent to England, and repeated Petitions have been forwarded to his Majesty in Council, but without any other result to the petitioners than that of seeing their situation getting worse and worse every day.

In 1813, Sir Thomas Maitland arrived in Malta as governor, when the last deadly blow was given to the remaining national institutions of the Maltese. Their magistrates, under the name of Giurati, formed a highly respectable Board, which had existed for many centuries, and was respected even by the despotic grand masters, as well as by the French themselves ; but in 1818 their office was totally abolished, so as to leave no trace whatever of a Representative Body in the island of Malta ! Respectable and meritorious Maltese have been dismissed from their situations for no other reason than to make room for Englishmen of Sir Thomas Maitland's choice. The salaries of the heads of several families were given to a few individuals newly arrived in the island, whose merits were totally unknown to the natives. The Maltese occupied formerly all the principal situations in the island, including that of Governor of Gozo, with the exception of the posts of public secretary and treasurer ; but at this period they were removed, humiliated in their own country by their protectors, and lowered to the rank of inferior officers. The island has been loaded with insupportable burdens ; high duties have been established, and pensions assigned on her revenue to individuals not Maltese,

and not resident in the island. Restrictions on the trade, high quarantine dues and charges, have been established, and no trace of a free port is any longer left; excessive expenses in the numerous tribunals; confusion in the laws by continual alterations, and by frequent contradicting proclamations, have succeeded. The University, anciently endowed with sufficient funds for its support, has been rendered mercenary by imposing on the students a monthly tax, while the revenue has been engrossed by the Government. Sir Thomas Maitland was the governor, the legislator, and the judge, and stood, a military man, omnipotent in the island. By a single stroke of his pen, numbers of individuals were reduced to misery and starvation. Even the brown barley bread, the only food of the poor, was highly taxed, to upwards of 100 per cent.

The Maltese, deprived of the blessings of a free press, notwithstanding their repeated supplications for the privilege, had no means of making known their grievances to the British nation, from their own country; while the press being monopolized by the Local Government, the progress of intellect is checked, and the natives are deprived of the benefit of so profitable a branch of employment. The Maltese, governed as they are by a liberal nation, jealous of the liberty of the press, cannot but feel strongly at being totally deprived of so great a privilege.

Even their humble petitions encountered the greatest difficulties from the local authorities at Malta; so as almost to impede the voice of the faithful Maltese subjects in reaching the British Throne; and, after a Petition to the King had been signed by almost all the nobility of the island, and other respectable inhabitants, they were designated by the ruler, a despotic military man, in a printed publication stuck up in all public places, as weak, inconsiderate, turbulent, and factious, and some of the subscribers have been deprived of their situations to the present day.

At the present moment, when the Maltese are starving, and a great number of them are obliged to quit their

country to seek a livelihood elsewhere, they are compelled to pay an excessive duty on wheat, which on many occasions amounted to from 50 to 60 per cent, according to the quality, or to the rise and fall in its price.

It would occupy too much space to enumerate here the hardships and sufferings of the Maltese people. Deprived of their liberty, their rights and privileges disregarded or suspended, without any Representatives of their own to whom they could apply for redress, reduced to the lowest state of destitution and misery, a general discontent prevails amongst them, though they are patient, submissive, and quiet. Who and where is the interested person that can wish to perpetuate this horrible system, and who dare or can contradict the truths here stated? Let him come forward if there be any; we shall be ready to meet him.

To remedy all these grievances, however, a most unexpected and extraordinary proclamation was issued at Malta, on the 1st of May last, creating and constituting a council for the Island of Malta, composed of eight members, all selected or appointed by the King and the Local Government, of whom five, including the Governor, must hold offices, *and not one is elected by the people!* A Council of this kind is certainly not according to the wishes, interests, and prayers of the Maltese, and therefore they have determined to apply to the British Parliament, in order to obtain the restitution of what has been despotically and unjustly taken from them, and for which they have, on several occasions, in ancient or modern times, sacrificed immense property, and shed their blood. A notice has already been given by a highly respectable member of Parliament, William Ewart, Esq., member for Liverpool, of bringing forward a motion on the 18th of August next, in the House of Commons, in order to call the attention of that wise and impartial House to the interesting and important Island of Malta; which the Maltese hope will be supported by a considerable number of the distinguished and disinterested members who compose that honourable assembly.

In support of the above assertions; and for the better information of the reader, the following documents are deemed to be of great interest, and worthy of insertion in this humble publication of a faithful Maltese.

The Maltese hope, and are convinced, that the system before alluded to will soon be changed, and that a just and impartial Council will be established for the good government of the island; and the content and happiness of the Maltese, who will always be ready to shed their blood in defence of the possession of their island by Great Britain. If the Maltese be satisfied with the form of their government, and should their rights and privileges be restored to them conformably to the spirit of the British constitution, the British Government may be assured that no power in the world can ever snatch the island out of its hands. Every one knows the importance of Malta to Great Britain. It possesses a formidable fortress, a beautiful and commodious harbour, an arsenal, a storehouse, a place of refreshment, a rendezvous in the centre of the Mediterranean, with a faithful population of one hundred and twenty thousand souls. Is such a place to be left in the state of destitution and slavery in which it now exists? Certainly not. A remedy no doubt will soon be granted. The just and unquestionable claims of the Maltese are manifest to all the world, and admitted by the British Government itself, as it clearly appears by the documents already mentioned herewith inserted. The confidence reposed by the Maltese in the British officers, when they placed their island under British protection; the sacrifice of the lives of twenty thousand of their countrymen, the immense loss of property sustained by them during two years of a rigorous blockade, and by the capitulation of 1800, made without their participation and concurrence; their patience and submission to the unlawful destruction of their institutions, and the many alterations made in opposition to their interests, together with their fidelity and attachment to the British nation; these and many other strong reasons demand and entitle them to the prompt assistance

and support of every Englishman. Many authors have written fully on the just claims of the Maltese, and on the state of the island, among whom may be enumerated, Mr. William Eton, Mr. John Joseph Dillon, Capt. C. W. Pasley, Mr. E. Blaquiere, and Mr. James Webster, from the works of all of whom some extracts are also introduced into these pages.

SALARIES AND PENSIONS.

The following list of salaries and pensions, so far as it is matter of public remark among the inhabitants (no documents being ever published in the island, nor permission granted to any Maltese to inspect the public accounts), will show what sums are granted to a certain number of English individuals; which sums, although in England they would not be considered great, yet in a small place like Malta, where trade is completely ruined, and work, besides being difficult to obtain, is also very poorly paid for when obtained; they are in reality very large, not only for their amount, but in proportion to the salaries and pensions to the Maltese; and what is worse, such high salaries are often bestowed upon persons who have not the least claim on the government of Malta; but through interest, connexions or acquaintance with persons in power, either in England or in Malta itself; while it has occurred, that meritorious persons strongly attached to the English Government, for the sole reason of being Maltese, have been left without pensions in their old age; and families of other meritorious persons have been left destitute of any assistance after their death.

SALARIES.	ABOUT
Lieutenant-Governor	£ 5000
Chief Secretary	1500
Chief Justice	1500
Treasurer	1000
Superintendent of Quarantine	800
Attorney General	800
Collector of Land Revenue	700
Agent for the Grain Department	600
Superintendent of the Do.	500
Director of Public Works	500
Auditor of Accounts	500
First Magistrate of Judicial Police and Coroner*	430
First Assistant, Secretary's Office	430
Magistrate of Gozo, and Collector of Land Revenue	400
Collector of Customs	400
Superintendent of Marine Police	350

* After the death of John Locker, Esq., the place of First Magistrate of Judicial Police is said to have been abolished.

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Magistrate of Executive Police	350
Lieutenant-Governor of Gozo	350
Chaplain to the Civil Government	300
Superintendent of the Government Printing-Office	250
Superintendent of the Island Post-Office	250
Clerk, Secretary's Office, &c.	200
Adjutant of Police, and Lieutenant R. M. Fencibles	200
Captain of the Quarantine	200
Magistrate of Judicial Police	180
Clerk, Grain Department	160
Secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor of Gozo	150
Clerk, Civil Hospital	120
Clerk to the Auditor of Accounts	120
Head Master of Public Works	110
Some of the above have besides half-pay in the Army or Navy, and some have a house rent free, and others at a rental of one-third only of the annual value.	
Colonel Rivarola, a Corsican	850
The Agent in England for the Government of Malta, and certainly <i>not for the Maltese</i>	500
Rev. F. Laing, Pension	400
Sir Wm. Ball, Do.	600
R. R. Wood, Esq. (if still continued, we hope not)	1000
Audit Colonial Office in England *	2300
To persons styling themselves knights of St. John, in England†	1600
	<hr/>
	£25,600

If from the above sum of 25,600*l.* we deduct the last two items, not knowing how they are distributed, and that of 5000*l.* enjoyed by the Lieutenant Governor, which it is not proper to compare with that of any other officer, there remains 16,700*l.* divided among thirty-four individuals, viz., thirty-three Englishmen and one Corsican. Taking the salaries of thirty-four Maltese employed under Government of the highest rank and salaries, we find as follows:—

	ABOUT
4 Judges, at 430 <i>l.</i> each	£1720
1 „	350
1 „	300
6 Lord-Lieutenants of Districts, at 85 <i>l.</i> each	510
1 Cashier to the Treasurer	400
1 Second Assistant Secretary's Office, and Registrar of the Supreme Council of Justice	400
1 Magistrate of Judicial Police	250

* Excessively high rate for a place like Malta.

† Unknown to the Maltese, and who knows whether they are entitled to this?

1 Assistant Land Revenue	..	11	11	11	200
2 „ Marine Police	..	6.	..	11	350
1 Collector of Excise*	..	..	..	..	200
1 Magistrate for the Markets	..	..	..	..	200
1 Purveyor, Civil Hospital	11	..	..	..	200
1 Physician ditto.	..	..	..	..	120
2 Surgeons ditto.	..	..	..	..	240
2 King's Counsel	..	..	..	..	340
1 Register to Appeal Court	..	..	..	..	150
3 „ to Civil Court, 1, 2 and 3 Halls	..	..	..	..	300
1 Assistant of the Executive Police	..	..	..	..	120
1 Magistrate of Judicial Police	..	..	..	..	180
1 Police and Quarantine Physician	..	..	..	..	140
1 Captain of the Lazaretto	..	..	..	..	200
34					<u>£6870</u>

Besides this difference of nearly £10,000, it is to be remarked that the four eldest Maltese judges are paid salaries equal to that of the first assistant of the Chief Secretary's Office; and the two junior a great deal less; and if we make the comparison, say the salaries of the judges, with those of the several heads of departments, we shall find a great difference against the judges, although the duties of the several heads of departments are not comparable with those of a judge. Many situations of the former List, we may say, are complete sinecures; and if we consider that besides the hardship to the Maltese of having been deprived of the advantage of occupying in their own country situations at the head of the several departments, the small comparative proportion of salaries allowed them, only on account of being Maltese, is to them another ground of humiliation, and consequently of disgust, to which also contributes in a large degree, a system of considering the native inhabitants as an inferior class of beings, which by some is impudently and shamefully asserted without the least hesitation, and what is a matter of wonder, by some amongst those very persons who enjoy so great a share out of the public revenue.

* This office, hitherto filled by a Maltese, it appears, was, in the month of May last, abolished, and the collection of Excise on wine and spirits has been committed to the collector of customs—of course an English Esquire,—for no other purpose, as it is said generally in the island, than to give an augmentation of salary to the latter gentleman. This system of taking situations out of the hands of the Maltese and giving them to Englishmen is still going on, notwithstanding the frightful situation of the Maltese, and their continual prayers for redress. However, this, no doubt, will soon be stopped by the wise measures of the British Parliament, and every one will be placed in his proper post. What can be expected but that the patience of the Maltese will at last be exhausted? Are not thirty-five years of oppression enough for any people?

*Address of Brigadier-General Graham to the Maltese in the last year
of the siege of Valletta, against the French.*

BRAVE MALTESE,—You have rendered yourselves interesting and conspicuous to all the world. History does not present a more surprising example. Given in prey to your invaders, deprived of the means of resistance, an eternal slavery seemed to be your inevitable destiny.—The *oppression* and the *sacrilege* of your tyrants became *insufferable*. Without considering the consequences, you determined at any price to vindicate your wrongs; without arms, without the resources of war, you broke in pieces your chains.—Your patriotism, your courage, your religion, supplied all wants. Your energy commanded victory, and enemies formidable to the best-disciplined troops of Europe, ceded in every point to your matchless efforts, and hid their disgrace behind the ramparts.—The courageous battalions of the towns (*casali*) have ever since confined them there with a vigilance and a patience worthy of the cause of liberty.—You asked assistance. The powers which act in alliance for the support of civil society, and of religion, hastened to your alleviation. Arms, ammunition, money, and corn, were furnished you; their ships have intercepted the succours to your enemies.—My master, Sovereign of a people free and generous, sent me with a *handful of men* to support you, until an imposing force should be prepared for the reduction of Valletta; but the circumstances of the war have hitherto retarded it: in the mean-time, this is a precious moment, and it ought not to be lost.—What then is to be done to profit by so favourable a circumstance? I will anticipate your answer. You are again ready to unite in mass, to complete the glorious work which you began.—To arms then, O Maltese! be the universal cry of the island; for God and your country! Who is there so deaf to every sentiment of duty and of honour, who will not voluntarily obey such an invitation! None, none, but traitors, or vile time-servers: such we do not desire in our ranks. That infallible voice which shall distinguish with the title of hero every man who exposes himself for his country, will equally imprint on the names of those traitors indelible infamy—Abandon then for a few weeks the exercise of your accustomed industry. Put yourselves under the immediate direction of your own officers, and under their guidance; their skill and experience in their profession will conduct you, with the utmost advantage, to the great and important object of the *final conquest* of your enemies.—A weak and dispirited garrison, disproportioned to the defence of such extensive works, cannot resist your efforts: success will recompense your labour, and you will return instantly into the bosom of your families, proud, justly proud, of having saved your country.

At the head quarters at GUDIA,
the 19th June, 1800.

THOS. GRAHAM,
B.-General commanding the allied
troops at the blockade of Valletta.

Mr. Cameron's Proclamation on taking possession of the Government of Malta.

TO THE MALTESE NATION.—Charged by his Majesty, the King of Great Britain, to conduct all the affairs (except the military) of these islands of Malta and Gozo, with the title of his Majesty's Civil Commissioner, I embrace, with the highest satisfaction, this opportunity of assuring you of the paternal care and affection of the King towards you; and that HIS MAJESTY GRANTS YOU FULL PROTECTION, AND THE ENJOYMENTS OF ALL YOUR DEAREST RIGHTS. He will protect your churches, your holy religion, your persons, and your property.

His paternal care extends to the hospitals and other charitable establishments; to the education of youth, to orphans, to the poor, and to all those who recur to his beneficence.

Happy people! whom the hand of God has saved from the horrible misery and oppression under which groan so many innocent nations! receive with gratitude all this goodness from a King, who is the father of his subjects; who protects the weak against the strong; the poor against the rich; under whose dominion all are equally protected by the law.

Hitherto you have conducted yourselves with decorum and submission to the legitimate authorities; and your ancient fame in arms has not been tarnished by the defence which you lately made of your country.

Commerce being now extended, the arts and sciences encouraged, manufactures and agriculture supported, and industry rewarded, Malta will become the emporium of the Mediterranean, and the seat of content.

To execute such gracious commands of my Sovereign is not less my ardent desire, than it is my sacred duty. My door shall be open to all; I will hear every one's plea; I shall be ready to render justice; to cause the law to be observed, tempering it with clemency; and to receive every information which shall have for its object the welfare of the Maltese; and, above all, I shall devote myself to the means of promoting the cultivation and manufacture of cotton, and of introducing and maintaining plenty in these islands.

CHARLES CAMERON.

Palace, July 15th, 1801.

Extract of a Letter from Lord Hawkesbury to Sir John Warren, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, dated Downing-street, Jan. 29th, 1803.

Lord Hawkesbury, in transmitting his Majesty's instructions to Sir John Warren, the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, relative to the stipulations in favour of the

Maltese inhabitants in the intended re-establishment at Malta of the order of St. John, at the treaty of Amiens, says:—

“It is important that your Excellency should impress the Russian Government with the conviction of the services rendered by the inhabitants of Malta to his Majesty and to the common cause, at the time when the French were in possession of the island; that, for nearly two years, they maintained a state of constant and active hostility against the French; that several thousands of them perished in this state of hostility; and that these efforts were made at a time when they could receive assistance from no other foreign power; that the attachment evinced by the Maltese to his Majesty during the blockade, and their loyalty to him since he has obtained possession of the island, give them a peculiar claim to his protection, and a right to expect, that, in the future arrangements for the island, some advantages should be stipulated in their favour; that, independent of every consideration of good faith, your Excellency well knows that the Maltese inhabitants, if attached to their Government, are equal to the defence of the island; and that every motive of policy therefore, as well as of justice, renders it expedient to endeavour to conciliate their affections.”

And, in speaking about the Maltese langue then intended to be established, continued to say,—

“And it may be proposed to revive, under such regulations and modifications as may be judged expedient, the national council which formerly existed in that island, which should form no part of the order, but which should have a share in the government of the island, and a deliberative voice in all its internal concerns. A body of this description could not be considered as in any respect derogatory to the ancient institution of the order, and would be conformable to what existed within the island till within a very very few years. It is for the purpose of obtaining information on these points, that instructions will be sent to Sir Alexander Ball; it being impossible, after all that has passed, to bring the negotiation to an issue, without some communication with the principal inhabitants of Malta.”

Lord Melville's Speech in the House of Lords 23rd of May 1803.

LORD MELVILLE rose to give his hearty concurrence to the address which had been moved by the noble Lord (Pelham); and in pledging himself to support his Majesty in the maintenance of the just rights and interests of the country, he begged leave to explain, in a few words, the sentiments he entertained upon this important subject. In alluding to what had been said respecting Malta, he observed, that the question was now freed from much of the difficulty and perplexity in which it had been involved. He rejoiced most heartily that nobody could stand up to deny that the 10th article of the treaty

of Amiens was totally incapable of being carried into execution. He congratulated the house, he congratulated the country, that it was so incapable of being executed; nay, he thought it matter of congratulation that the French, by their obstinacy, had prevented any new and adequate arrangement for the independence of Malta from being substituted in the room of that which circumstances had so completely rendered impracticable. What indeed would have been the situation of Malta with all its guarantees? Was the guarantee of Spain, of Prussia, of France, to be relied upon? It would not be pretended that such securities were of any avail. The only guarantee of importance, and which could have any efficacy, was that of Russia, in conjunction with Great Britain. He spoke of the importance of Russia in such an arrangement with the greatest satisfaction, for he considered it mutually for the interest of the two countries to cherish the strictest union and alliance. Nevertheless he was happy that the guarantee of Russia was not to be attached to an arrangement in every way so inadequate to the object it had in view. It was in fact most advantageous for Russia that Malta should be under the protection of Great Britain. It was Great Britain alone which, by its naval superiority, by its capacity to avail itself of the harbours and naval station of Malta, was calculated to be the custodian of Malta. Every other plan for its protection and its independence was futile and inadequate. Now indeed he was at liberty to contemplate the possibility of realizing an object of so much importance as the settlement of Malta under British protection. Well did he remember the melancholy moments he had passed, when, after reading the definitive treaty, he found Malta exposed to so much danger of falling into the hands of a power that would employ it for our destruction. The importance of that island had long appeared to him to be very great, and Europe had in the most decisive instances witnessed it. By means of Malta it was that the French had attacked and made themselves masters of Egypt. By Malta it was that we had been enabled to recover that possession. If Malta remained in our hands, it was impossible that all the efforts of France, that all the armaments she could send forth, could obtain possession of Egypt, while we, with a superior navy, had the opportunity of availing ourselves of the harbours of Malta. Malta, therefore, was to be considered as of infinite importance to the strengthening and security of our empire in India. He considered it as a great tower erected in the Mediterranean, on which the flag of Great Britain, displayed and floating, would hold forth an invitation to the people of the Mediterranean, of the Adriatic, and of the Levant seas, to rally round it, and to avail themselves of the protection of this country. It therefore was a subject of congratulation, that, without any charge upon our good faith, an opportunity had occurred in which the 10th article of the treaty of Amiens could not be executed. As we were now going to war, and as Malta formed one of the main objects of the war, he wished that its value should be fully understood, and that we should likewise keep in view the necessity of availing ourselves of its advantages to the utmost. He hoped to hear no more of the Order

being restored; or of the independence of the island being in any manner guaranteed. While Great Britain was able to keep a superior fleet in the harbours of Malta, in the protection of Great Britain it would be secure. It was evident how great interests depended upon the retention of Malta; were we then to give up that possession which was so essential to those interests? If, then, we were going to war for Malta, it was an object to animate the courage and reward the achievements of our fleets and armies. We should go to war, therefore, upon this ground as a broad question both of right and of general policy. In this view it was matter of congratulation that Malta was to be considered as a British object. We had now got rid of any consideration of the knights of St. John. What was the situation of those knights when we obtained possession of the island? They had degraded and overthrown their Order by an act of perfidy; nor could they be restored without the severest injury to the people of the island. The Order had become odious to the Maltese by the act of treachery by which they had put them under the government of France, and it was doubtful whether the Maltese would not have deemed themselves less unfortunate in being transferred to France than being again placed under the command of an Order which they had so much reason to hate and to distrust. Besides, it was to be considered that we went to the aid of the Maltese, previously engaged in the reduction of the French; and it was greatly against the wishes of the people that the Order was to be reinstated upon any terms. We ought therefore to secure to the Maltese a wise and suitable form of civil government, to be enjoyed by them under the protection of the British power. This object ought to be prosecuted and settled without any delay, so that whenever any new negotiation should be set on foot, we might be enabled to say that the people of Malta, under a form of government agreeable to their wishes, were now established under the protection of Great Britain. He wished it to be understood that he considered the retention of Malta for ever to be a most essential object, and one to which, in the relative circumstances of France and this country, we were fully entitled to prosecute by war. In voting for the address we therefore voted our concurrence in the war, of which that was the principal object. The attainment of it would be of the utmost benefit to all the states of the Levant, and under our protection alone Malta could be rendered independent and happy.

Extract of Sir Alexander John Ball's Letter to Mr. Secretary Windham, 28th Feb. 1807, as published at his own press in Malta.

"You are aware, Sir, that, when the British first took possession of the island, it was stipulated that the privileges of the Maltese should be preserved, and their ancient laws continued."—(They were then, N. B., governed by their ancient laws.)

Extract from Sir Thomas Maitland's Minute, dated Valletta, 5th October, 1813.

"His Excellency cannot refrain from stating to the Maltese, even thus early, the great interest His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, acting in the name and on behalf of His Majesty, has been graciously pleased to take in their welfare,—the deep consideration he has given to their hitherto uncertain and unsettled state,—and his gracious determination henceforth to recognise the people of Malta and Gozo as subjects of the British Crown, and as entitled to its fullest protection.

"It will be His Excellency's duty, in carrying into effect His Royal Master's benevolent instructions on this head, to secure to the Maltese, in the fullest manner, the free exercise of their religion,—to maintain their ecclesiastical establishment,—to introduce such amelioration in the proceedings of the courts of law, as will secure to every one the certainty of speedy and effective justice,—to make such improvement in the laws themselves, as past experience or change of circumstances may have rendered necessary and advisable,—and, in short, to adopt every measure that may be requisite to secure to the inhabitants a full share of that happiness, wealth, security, and prosperity, fortunately enjoyed by all the subjects of the British Empire in every part of the world."

Copy of the Lieutenant-Governor Sir Frederick Cavendish Ponsonby's Proclamation, notifying the Creation and Establishment of a Council of Government in Malta.

His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, with feelings of high satisfaction, is pleased to notify and publish to the people of these Possessions, that His Majesty the King, in his anxious solicitude for the welfare and prosperity of his Maltese subjects, and other the inhabitants of this island and its dependencies, has been graciously pleased, with the advice of his Privy Council, to create, constitute, and appoint a Council within these his Possessions, to advise and assist in the administration of the government thereof; which Council is to consist of seven persons, exclusive of the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, or officer administering for the time being the government of these possessions; of which seven, four shall at all times be persons holding offices within this island or its dependencies, and the remaining members shall be persons not holding offices. And his Majesty has been graciously pleased to declare and appoint the senior officer for the time being in command of his land forces in this island, not being in the administration of the government, the honourable the Chief Justice of this island and its dependencies for the time being, the Most Rev. the Archbishop Bishop of this island for the time being, and the Chief Secretary to Government for the time being, to be such four official

members as aforesaid. And His Majesty has been pleased further to declare, that the three unofficial members of such council shall be selected by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, two from and out of the chief landed proprietors and merchants of this island, being His Majesty's native-born subjects, and the third from and out of the principal merchants of this island, being British-born subjects, who shall have been actually resident for a period of not less than two years.

To the members of this his council His Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant the enjoyment of freedom of debate and vote, in all affairs of public concern that may be brought under their consideration in council, and also to authorize them, whilst such members, to assume the adjunctive style of *Honorable*.

His Majesty has also declared his will and pleasure, that a proper person be appointed to perform the duties of clerk of the said council, who shall attend and be present at the meetings and deliberations thereof, unless when otherwise directed by the Governor, or Lieutenant Governor, or in their absence by the senior member of council presiding, but without voting or concurring in such deliberations. And His Majesty has signified his pleasure that the Assistant Secretary to Government be appointed to perform the functions of such clerk.

Palace, Valletta, 1st May, 1835.

By command of His Excellency,

FRED. HANKEY,

Chief Secretary to Government.

Mr. Wm. Eton, in his work "Authentic Materials for a History of the People of Malta, published in London in 1802, 1805, and 1807," besides having strongly demonstrated by the most convincing proofs and the wisest arguments the policy and the necessity of restoring to the Maltese their sacred rights and privileges, for which they had so advantageously struggled against a formidable enemy, in speaking about their condition in ancient times, says,

"A small nation, but greatly illustrious, and deserving to be better known to us in particular. I shall afterwards go back to more ancient times, and prove that under the Phœnicians and Romans, the Maltese were governed by their own laws and customs; that there is no nation on the face of the globe, now existing, that has defended liberty so long, and that this island was much more flourishing, rich, and populous, before it was in possession of the knights of St. John, than at any period since; the cities, temples, and public buildings, more magnificent, though Valletta and its superb palaces did not exist."

Mr. John Jos. Dillon in his "Memoir concerning the Political State of Malta," published in London in 1807, says :—

"Erroneous ideas are entertained respecting the actual state of this island, as well as the character and the claims of its inhabitants; oblivion seems to prevail of the means by which we first obtained a footing in Malta—of this assurances pledged to the Maltese—of the obligations imposed on us towards this people by a due regard to public faith;—and no attention appears to have been given to the cultivation of the wonderful advantages which we may derive from such an acquisition in a time of *peace*, by an immediate adoption, whilst at war, of measures calculated to promote in a very considerable degree the commercial interests of Great Britain.

"The sentiments and claims of the Maltese cannot be too generally known, nor can the policy of this country in their regard be too fully considered or discussed. Are the pretensions of this people unfounded, or are their expectations unreasonable? Convince them of their error. On the other hand, if their claims be established upon the most acknowledged principles of national law, and by the evidence of incontrovertible facts, why should they be withheld from the consideration of a British public?

"The assertions advanced in the following pages will be found supportable by state papers in general circulation—by the language contained in the proclamations of our officers, and never disavowed by the British Government—by the representations of the Maltese themselves laid before parliament, after previous unsuccessful applications.

It is our duty to ensure the inhabitants a stable and proper constitution, towards which they themselves had laboured long before any assistance had been expected either from Great Britain or any of her allies, and while fighting with their enemies, to whom they had been treacherously betrayed by the knights of St. John.

"If I have endeavoured, and in strong terms, to enforce the necessity of arranging *with the Maltese* a form of government, I have only adopted the recommendation given in parliament by a noble Viscount, of whom it is but justice to admit that his Lordship was the first to urge the propriety of retaining Malta, and of settling a constitution with its inhabitants. I request leave to refer the reader to the first speech delivered by Viscount Melville in the House of Peers. In that speech his Lordship clearly intimates the same doubt which I have expressed, as to our right of enacting laws for the Maltese without their consent, and that something is still requisite to invest us with the full sovereignty of the island.

"The Maltese nation, it is to be recollected, have been accustomed to assemble; and we have already treated with a congress which they had formed. I can see no reason why a similar congress should not be again convened. Should an apprehension be entertained upon this point, in consequence of any dissatisfaction which they may feel at the delays which have taken place in the settlement of the island, it is to be considered that further procrastination will only augment the evil;

and may lead to consequences still more serious. We have still the opportunity of governing the island by the power of law—let us deprecate being driven to the extremity of defending our establishment at Malta by the sword.

“The question therefore of retaining Malta is a matter solely between ourselves and the Maltese, and to this question we are bound to apply with a spirit of generosity congenial to the British character—of fairness, and of equitable consideration with respect to circumstances anomalous in the history of our foreign acquisitions.

“It is not enough that we declare to Europe, and to Russia more particularly, by establishing without delay a form of government for Malta, our intention of preventing any other power from obtaining that island. We must consider the means of keeping Malta to ourselves, of improving its condition and its resources, of availing ourselves of all the advantages resulting from its position and our own maritime superiority, and principally of securing our dominion in that island, not only against foreign invasion, but internal revolt. We must with this view endeavour to establish our power not only in the fortresses of the island, but in the hearts of the inhabitants; and by an attentive consideration of their disposition, their habits, their prejudices civil and religious, and their laws, endeavour to effect that settlement of its government, which may be calculated to conciliate the affections and secure the allegiance of a people willing and anxious to become subject to our power.

“Motives of common policy dictate this course; but there are circumstances by which it is imperiously required. The history of the island shows that the Maltese are a people neither mean nor abject, but resolute and intrepid; and that they know how to wage, with success, internal war: perhaps no nation ever struggled more strenuously for its liberties. Witness in ancient times their repeated purchases of the island to themselves—the laws of their sovereigns authorizing departure from allegiance in case their privileges were invaded—witness in modern times the transactions of 1775, and the revolt of 1798 against the French.

“The causes also of the latter transactions proceeded, perhaps, as much from a fond recollection of ancient constitutions transmitted from their ancestors—from a love of liberty, and a wish of independence, as from immediate oppression. The history of the order of St. John, during its establishment in the island, proves that they had trampled upon and gradually subverted the liberties of the Maltese—the arrangement of Government, when the Maltese took up arms against the French, that these liberties are in the recollection of the people, and their constitution known, if not practically, at least by tradition; with all islanders a matter of peculiar veneration—the war of 1798, that when offended they are terrible foes even to brave experienced troops;—and their ready acquiescence in what was desired of them, after the surrender of the French, that they are well disposed towards this country as their natural friends and allies.

“The perseverance of the Maltese in the contest against the French,

and their compliance with the wishes of the British officers upon the occasion of the capitulation, are circumstances which strongly denote the valour, and at the same time the tractability of the Maltese character. To me they appear a people brave in war, and peaceable when the din of arms is past—inspired with that love of liberty which revolts at oppression, but which in its ardour to regain lost freedom, degenerates not into licentiousness. The valour of the Maltese is recorded in the annals of many centuries—their submission to the law is attested by several writers among our own countrymen of the present day—and I wish to call the attention of those by whom this memoir may be perused to the following important fact. In the very moment in which they flew to arms against the French, they established provisions of civil government, and resorted to their old-established constitution; not forgetting, even in the camp, the necessity of civil regulation, and marking an attachment not to the political refinements of the day, but the strongest predilection for the old and settled maxims of their ancestors. This fact appears to me to deserve great consideration, as it tends not only to exhibit in its true light the nature of the Maltese character, but also to direct our steps in the course of legislating for this people. It shows them to be *capable* of liberty, and removes in my mind many objections which I at first entertained to some of their privileges.

“These deductions appear to me obvious from indisputable facts; we want not, in order to form this conclusion, the evidence of any individual respecting the prevalence of sentiments among the Maltese, the certain existence of which is demonstrated by the whole tenor of their history, and by the political conduct which they have uniformly pursued!!! Let the Maltese question be decided by that conclusion, which every well-organized understanding must naturally draw from admitted facts, from the tendency of human nature, and the experience of mankind. Such appears to me the disposition of this people; and from a nation like ourselves it is entitled to peculiar respect, more particularly also from the *nature of the title* under which we hold at present possession of Malta.

“On what pretence can we justify a claim to the sovereignty of the island by right of conquest? Had we against the Maltese any cause of war? Had they violated any rule of neutrality? Had they furnished unlawful aid to our enemy? On the contrary did we not find them armed against that very enemy, and waging with him successful war? And is the mere circumstance of our ability to have surrounded the island with a numerous fleet, and to have deprived its inhabitants of subsistence after a long blockade of years, after another siege of Troy, a ground on which we are to establish a right of conquest over a people, I will not say merely inoffensive, but actually co-operating with ourselves in endeavouring to obtain a common object of legitimate warfare? Is it from the mere accident of a naval superiority that we are to assert a right not of mere *occupation* but of *absolute dominion* over a nation with whom we had no cause of quarrel, but who on the contrary were anxious to promote our interests and second

our endeavours, a nation who put away their arms and suspended the form of their government, not from any dread of our power, but from the desire and upon the assurances also of our protection and of amelioration in their political system? Such was the pledge on which we obtained a footing in this island.

"These observations have appeared to me necessary, in order that we may clearly comprehend the nature of our own establishment at Malta. Hitherto little has there been done towards a settlement upon a satisfactory footing of a permanent government calculated to gratify the wishes of the Maltese, secure their affections, establish internal tranquillity, and improve those advantages which the situation of the island peculiarly commands.

"In framing a constitution for the Maltese, the grand principle to be kept in view must be security to the Maltese of liberty, and to Great Britain of full power adequate to correct by law the effects which might result from an abuse of liberty at any time by the Maltese.

"It also appears to me, that whilst in organizing a new form of government for the Maltese we ought most attentively to consider and accede to the wishes of that people; we should endeavour at the same time to extirpate every cause of discontent which may grow out of any ancient system, by ameliorating the institutions to which they are attached.

"Let then, but by common consent, all existing codes and constitutions be revised, and modified in a manner suitable to the present times. Let a new system comprehending every thing that was wise—every thing that was free—every thing that is reasonably desired by the Maltese in the laws of former times be introduced; and let the day of its adoption be a new era, from the date of which all former broils shall be forgotten in the establishment of liberty and good government on a solid and permanent basis, ensuring the enjoyment of future tranquillity, of increasing prosperity, of national exaltation, and of those blessings which the Maltese so eminently deserve, and which they are entitled to claim upon the strongest grounds of justice and good faith from the people of Great Britain."

Captain C. W. Pasley, in his "Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire," published in London, in 1810, thus argues :

"By what has been related, the Maltese had sufficiently shown both their strength and their courage; but they felt, that without external assistance, they could scarcely hope to succeed in asserting their independence; because they had neither proper arms, nor had they a sufficient stock of provisions, nor of ammunition. They therefore threw themselves upon our protection.

"The Maltese did not take up arms to assist us. They (not we) were the principals in the war; and we went to their assistance, at a time when they had, from circumstances, a right to treat with us as an in-

dependent State, upon terms binding to both parties. It was they (not we) who may claim the principal share of the merit of expelling the French garrison; for, although we had power enough to have conquered both them and the French, such an enterprise would have required almost as great a force as that which we sent to Egypt, and might have cost us much blood. But, with such a handful of men, as that which we actually employed in Malta, so far from expelling the French, we could not even have remained one moment upon the island, without the powerful co-operation of its natives.

"After having thus been called to the supreme power in Malta, by the wishes of its people; and having established our dominion solely by their aid, what was the use which we made of our authority? The very first public act of ours, was to abuse their confidence; by transferring them, even without asking their consent, to their former unworthy masters, the knights; by a treaty made, unknown to them, with the very same tyrants, whose cruelty and oppression had, a little before, driven them to despair, and induced them to become voluntary subjects of Great Britain. I fear that little can be said in favour of the policy, and nothing in defence of the justice, of this conduct.

"Under the protection of the British Government,—a government too great to be jealous of them, and too good to oppress them,—they had formed an expectation of enjoying more freedom, honour, and prosperity, than under their former government."

Mr. E. Blaquiere in his "Letters from the Mediterranean, containing a Civil and Political Account of Sicily, Malta, &c., published in London in 1813," says:—

"Recurring to the civil and political relations of Malta, it is, I presume, quite unnecessary to say any thing more, as calculated to convince you, and to impress upon the minds of his Majesty's ministers the importance, and even absolute necessity, of giving to the inhabitants that which they have ardently been praying for during a period of thirteen years—'a constitution uniting the spirit of our old free and *legitimate* one with that of Great Britain.' If there was anything in this most rational demand, that militated against the interests of my Sovereign, or warred with the rights of humanity and immutable justice, I should be the first to condemn it: if it was impracticable, I would be equally ready to convince the Maltese, for whose future happiness I am deeply interested, that they asked too much; but I feel perfectly satisfied in my own mind, that, in soliciting his Britannic Majesty to make them participators in those enviable blessings which the British constitution guarantees to the meanest of his subjects, the most flattering compliment is conveyed, while it evinces an unequivocal attachment, and a sincere desire of adding to the strength of the empire.

"The incalculable value of Malta is now well understood: where, I should like to know, is that politician or statesman, that would sanc-

tion the remotest idea of its restitution in the event of a general peace to-morrow?—Has it not been acquired by the most legitimate rights of sovereignty—the people's choice? And is there any nation of Europe to which it is half so essential as to Great Britain? Our continuance in Sicily is, I regret to say, most precarious, most problematical; the Balearic islands are held in trust; Sardinia cannot be relied on, nor has it any naval station that would answer our purpose; let us then for ever banish the thought of abandoning Malta, upon the possession of which our power in the Mediterranean is vitally dependent; but in keeping it, let us conciliate the inhabitants, by a due regard to their religious tenets, to the establishment of equitable laws, and their faithful execution; by this we shall demonstrate a proud example of our liberality, that will resound through the whole continent of Europe; and in the language of their petition to the throne, 'gratify the hearts of a loyal and devoted people.'"

Extracts from Mr. James Webster's Travels, published in London in 1830:

"When the Maltese placed themselves under the protection of the English they stipulated to have a Consiglio Popolare, or Colonial Assembly, to regulate the affairs of the Government, enact laws, &c., and how can this be avoided without breaking faith with a confiding people, it is difficult to conceive. Yet, as the fulfilment of such a promise must necessarily interfere with ministerial patronage, the probability is, that the Consiglio Popolare will never be granted. Still such an assembly would be of manifest advantage, for it can hardly be imagined that the native Maltese would evince the monstrous apathy and recklessness which are shown under the present system, for all that regards the true interests of the Island.

"Since the English have had possession no new fortifications have been attempted, nor has any great anxiety been shown for the preservation of the works made to their hands. The cannon were formerly all of brass, but these have been gradually taken away since the English have had the Island. The Maltese complain bitterly of this; saying, that the English take everything; offices and employments, the domains of the knights, and, last not least, the very guns were taken. Year after year they have gradually disappeared, and the whole range of the fortifications manned at the time of the French capitulation; with one thousand brass cannon, all is now cleared.

"This cannot be said to arise from any scarcity of official functionaries; for at Malta these are found in most unnecessary numbers; sufficient, indeed, to manage the interests of an empire; heads of government departments made all English, with salaries of from 200*l.* to 1500*l.* a-year, exist in careless indolence, living instances of the liberality of the mother country, which pampers such excrescences. How should this be otherwise, while, not to mention the unbounded influence of the Colonial Secretary, or Sovereign, every new governor of a colony, feeling an anxious and natural solicitude for the advance-

ment of his family interests, must, if there be not a place vacant, make a new one for his purpose? People at home have little or no notion of that manner of administering colonial affairs, which entails such enormous and needless expenditure upon the mother country. By the present system neither Britain nor her possessions are benefited; the only advantages of it are reaped by the Government officers, and to say truth, 'the harvest is indeed great, and the labourers not a few!'

"No useful works are carried on by the Government, either for the comforts of the Maltese, or the security of Malta; but every possible opportunity is seized for appropriating money in patronage: that is in paying salaries to persons whose only claim is that of family connexion, or interest with 'the powers that be.' Would it be believed in England, that the property, or rental of the Maltese University has been appropriated to the service of the State, leaving only a small annual pittance for the purposes of the establishment? Can such an act receive the sanction of the Ministry at home? If so, then the little purpose has that hollow praise for generosity been purchased for which we have paid so dearly whenever opportunity presented itself. A new state of things is absolutely necessary at Malta. The island cannot pay the expenses of being governed after the present fashion.

"We have an excellent natural opinion of ourselves, and of every thing connected with our laws, institutions, &c.; and with reason. But the laws and institutions which are so advantageous at home, have not an equally good effect when partially and injudiciously introduced among our colonial subjects. Englishmen doubtlessly believe that Malta enjoys every possible privilege and advantage under English rule;—they may be assured that it does enjoy all the privileges and advantages which would speedily lead to a new performance of the Sicilian vespers, were not the natives well aware that England possesses the dominion of the sea, and that consequently every attempt at shaking off the yoke must prove abortive. The island could not possibly be worse governed than it now is. Does the Government show any disposition to protect trade, encourage manufactures, or improve the state of agriculture? Assuredly not.

"Nor is it the least grievance in the eyes of the Maltese, that they are shut out from the posts of honour and emolument, which are exclusively filled by English emigrants. With regard to the poor classes in Malta, their situation and prospects are really frightful. Numbers die of starvation; many are brought to the hospital ill with fevers, arising solely from want of food, and the faithful and well-disposed population of this once flourishing island are, it seems, to be offered living victims on the altar of pampered and wasteful luxury. Yet surely this is not the wish of the Legislature at home. The timely interference may check the devastating influence of misrule, and possessions which have too long been left to the mercy of heedless delegates, and which, by such interference, may yet be made to enjoy the blessings unquestionably attendant on British protection, will be faithfully administered."

